COMBAT KELLY

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COMBAT KELLY AND THE DEADLY DOZEN™

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AT LAST! THE STORY YOU DEMANDED!!

THE ORIGIN OF COMBAT KELLY!

COMBAT KELLY AND THE DEADLY DOZEN! TM

JANUARY, 1945! THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE HAS ENDED, AND THE AMERICAN THIRD ARMY THRUSTS TOWARD THE BORDERS OF GERMANY, TWELVE EX-CONVICTS KNOWN AS THE DEADLY DOZEN AT THE SPEARHEAD OF THE ATTACK... LED AND PRESSED EVER ONWARD BY A BATTLE-SCARRED CORPORAL WHO ONCE WAS CALLED...

THE BOSTON BOMBER!

BUT THERE WILL BE TIME ENOUGH FOR MEMORIES LATER, 'CAUSE RIGHT NOW OUR HEADED-FOR-HELL HEROES HAVE THE WHOLE BLASTED NAZI ARMY BREATHIN' DOWN THEIR NECKS...

THEY'RE CLOBBERIN' US, LIEUTENANT! OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO HEAD FOR THE WOODS!

STAN LEE PRESENTS AN ALL-NEW ORIGINAL!
GARY FRIEDRICH, WRITER
DICK AYERS, PENCILLER
MIKE ESPOSITO, INKER
JEAN IZZO, LETTERER
ROY THOMAS, EDITOR

BUT... OUR ORDERS ARE TO STAND... AND FIGHT!

WELL WE AIN'T GONNA BE ABLE TO DO MUCH MORE FIGHTIN' IF WE STAND OUT HERE IN THE OPEN...

...AND LET THE LUFTWAFFE BLOW US OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH!

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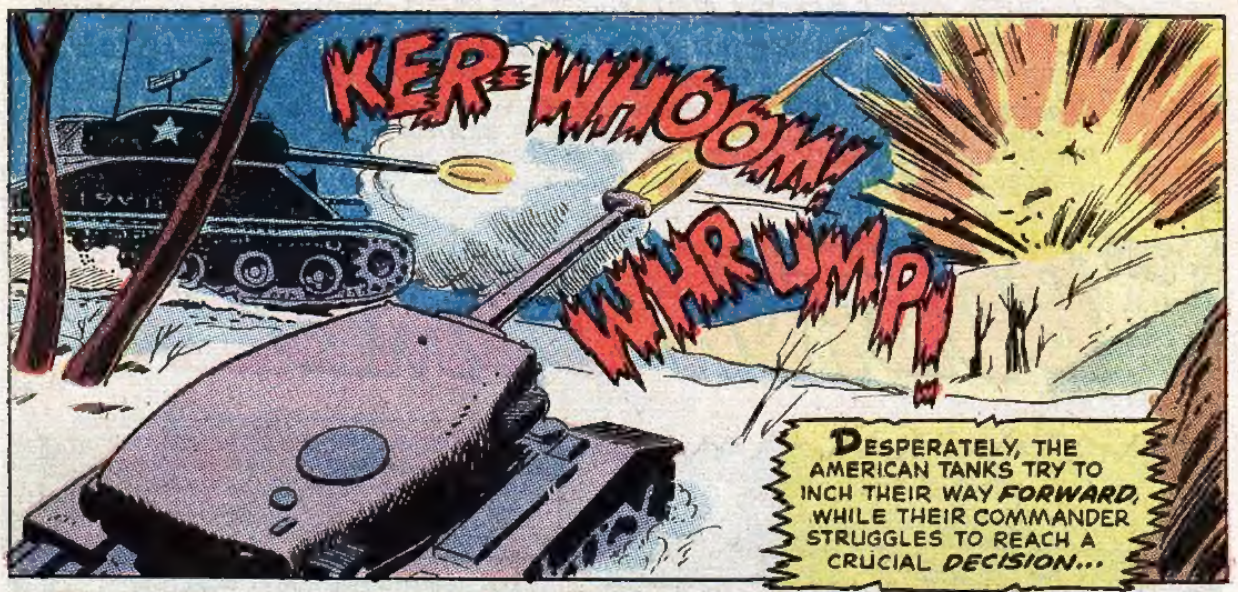
KER-WHOOM!
WHR UM P!
DESPERATELY, THE AMERICAN TANKS TRY TO INCH THEIR WAY FORWARD, WHILE THEIR COMMANDER STRUGGLES TO REACH A CRUCIAL DECISION...

BAROOM!
RUN FOR THE WOODS!
THAT LAST BLAST NAILED THE LIEUTENANT!

...AND WE GOT NO TIME TO WAIT AND SEE WHO'S GONNA TAKE OVER FOR 'IM!
SO WE'RE GONNA HEAD FOR COVER... AND WORRY ABOUT THE CHAIN OF COMMAND LATER!
BUT...YOU'RE TAKING A RUDDY BIG CHANCE, WOT?!
SO WHAT?! AT LEAST THIS WAY, I'LL BE ALIVE TO BE SORRY FOR IT!

WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO, KELLY?! WHERE'S THE...
GET THOSE TIN CANS INTO THE TREES, MAN! I'M GIVING THE ORDERS FOR NOW!
BUT AS THE TANKS RUMBLE TOWARD SAFETY, DEATH RAINS DOWN FROM THE SKIES... AND THE NAZI BOMBS TAKE A TERRIBLE TOLL...
TANK AFTER TANK IS DESTROYED FROM THE AIR AS MACHINE GUN BULLETS RIDDLE THE RANKS OF THE AMERICAN FOOT SOLDIERS...
...AND STILL, THOSE WHO REMAIN PRESS ONWARD TOWARD LIFE-PRESERVING SANCTUARY...
WE'VE MADE IT... AND THE TANKS ARE RIGHT BEHIND US!
YEAH... WHAT FEW OF 'EM ARE LEFT!
NOW LET'S PRAY THOSE TREES'LL GIVE US THE PROTECTION WE NEED! IF NOT... IT'S ALL OVER!

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IT'S ALL RIGHT! THE KRAUTS HAVEN'T GOT ENOUGH BOMBS LEFT...
...TO WASTE 'EM ON A TARGET THEY CAN'T SEE! THEY WON'T BE BACK UNTIL WE COME OUT!
SO WE GOTTA WAIT FOR REINFORCEMENTS!
AND A LITTLE FIRE WOULDN'T HURT IN THE MEANTIME...
...UNLESS MAYBE YOU GUYS WOULD RATHER FREEZE!
THERE'S GOTTA BE A BETTER WAY TO GO!
YEAH... LIKE BURNIN'.
THERE OUGHTTA BE PLENTY OF WOOD AROUND HERE! LET'S ROUND SOME UP!
GUESS THE CORP'S RIGHT! NOTHING WE CAN DO UNTIL HELP ARRIVES...
...BUT SIT AROUND A WARM FIRE AND CHEW THE FAT!
SPEAKIN' OF CHEWING... I'M STARVED! WONDER IF WE GOT ANY RATIONS LEFT!
THEN, TWO HOURS LATER, THEIR HANDS WARM AND THEIR STOMACHS REASONABLY FULL, THE SOLDIERS' THOUGHTS TURN FROM WAR...
WHY DON'T YA TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER, CORP?!
WHAT CAREER?! YOU MEAN AS ONE OF UNCLE SAM'S ACE JAIL-BIRDS?!
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN! YOUR BOXING CAREER! I KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT IT...
...'CAUSE I SAW YOU FIGHT ONCE... UP IN BOSTON!
OH, YEAH?! WELL THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO... ALMOST FIVE YEARS!
AND TOO MUCH HAS HAPPENED SINCE THEN ...TO MAKE IT WORTH YAPPIN' ABOUT ANYMORE!

THAT'S TAKIN THE EASY WAY OUT, MISTER! SOMETIMES IT'S EASIER TO GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST!
SO COME ON AND CLUE US IN! HOW'D YA GET THE NICKNAME "COMBAT," ANYWAY?!
I SAID I DON'T WANNA TALK ABOUT IT,,, AND I MEAN IT! SO DROP THE SUBJECT!
WHENEVER I EVEN THINK ABOUT IT,,, THIS KNOT FORMS IN MY GUT, AND I,,,
THEN GET RID OF THAT KNOT, CORP! JUST SPIT IT RIGHT OUT!
MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT! MAYBE I SHOULD TELL MY STORY, AND,,,
SPILL IT, MAN! WE'VE ALL BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THAT MURDER RAP, ANYWAY!
NOW YOU GOT A CHANCE FOR US TO LEARN YOUR SIDE!
THE GUYS ARE RIGHT! GIVE US THE STRAIGHT STUFF!
IT'LL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER! IT'LL MAKE US FEEL BETTER! AND IT'LL SURE GET OUR MINDS OFF THE COLD AND OFF THIS STINKIN' WAR FOR A WHILE!
OKAY! I CAN'T FIGHT OFF ALL TWELVE OF YA! WHERE SHOULD I BEGIN?!
AT THE BEGINNING, NATCH! THAT'S WHERE ALL MY PICTURES START!

"IT WAS A HOT SUMMER NIGHT IN *BOSTON*... JULY, 1940. WE WEREN'T IN THE *WAR*, YET... BUT I WAS GETTING READY TO FIGHT MY *OWN* KIND OF BATTLE... THE KIND WHERE TWO BRUISERS MEET IN A *SQUARE RING* AND PUNCH EACH OTHER *SILLY*, UNTIL ONE OF THEM CAN'T *STAND UP* ANYMORE! IT WAS THE FINALS OF THE *ARMY CHAMPIONSHIPS*, AND I WAS GOIN' FOR THE *HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE*...

IN *THIS CORNER*... AT 198 POUNDS... *MICHAEL "COMBAT" KELLY!*

AND IN THE *OTHER CORNER*... AT 194 POUNDS... *JAKE "THE SNAKE" COCHRAN* ...FOR THE INTER-SERVICE HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE!

BONG!

"I WENT RIGHT OUT AT THE BELL AND *PASTED* 'IM...

"THEN I CAUGHT 'IM *AGAIN*... THIS TIME WITH A GOOD *UPPER-CUT*...

"BUT AS HE FELL BACKWARDS AND I MOVED IN FOR THE *QUICK KILL*...

THIS'S *TOO EASY!* GOT A FEELIN' SOMETHING'S *WRONG!*

"STILL, I HAD A *FIGHT* TO WIN, SO I LUNGED AHEAD AND *CLOUTED* HIM...

WE'RE IN LESS THAN A *MINUTE*... AND I'VE *GOT* 'IM... BUT THAT'S WHAT'S *WORRYIN'* ME!

ONE! *TWO!* *THREE!* *FOUR!* *FIVE!*

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PULSATING PRONOUNCEMENTS AND PERTINENT PROPAGANDA FROM THE PUNDITS WHO PLAY FOR FUN!

ITEM! No STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX this month, pilgrim! Turns out ol' Smiley feels he just about talked himself out *last* time around, with an awesome epistle which took up the length and breadth of the whole Bullpen page! Instead, our peerless new Publisher and erstwhile Editorial Director would prefer that we clue you in about some of the nifty new artists, writers, and phantasmagorical features we've got lined up for you this month and in the sun-splashed days to come! Ready? Then away we go. . . .

ITEM! Biggest bombshell of all is the first fantastic issue of a comic-mag called DOC SAVAGE, THE MAN OF BRONZE! Unless you've been hiding in the wilds of Borneo, you recognize that name instantly as belonging to the old-time pulp-magazine hero who's been more popular than ever these past few years, as the super-star of a series of Bantam paperbacks—more than sixty to date, and still going strong. And now, mighty Marvel will be chronicling some of his greatest adventures in comix form! Doc's first ish was scripted by our spanking-new Editor ROY THOMAS, and drawn by the wildly-acclaimed team of ROSS (Boss) ANDRU and Long JOHN SEVERIN—and we've got a hunch that this is gonna be one of the biggies, right up there with rapturously-received newcomers like HERO FOR HIRE, DRACULA, WEREWOLF BY NIGHT, and WARLOCK! So get in on the ground floor with DOC SAVAGE, hear—and no getting off till we reach the 86th floor! (And, an artful aside to forestall about a zillion letters—yep, we've got THE SHADOW lined up for the weeks to come, also—so put away that crystal ball and start saving up your shekels, perspicacious one!)

ITEM! We've got some other fabulous firsts lined up for you this time, as well—but we'll let you read about *them* in the Checklist section! Meanwhile, just to prove we really *mean* it when we say that Marvel is on the move again, we've been busy digging up some talented new artists and writers to boggle your mind! Want a ferinstance or three? Well, try Far-Out FRANK BRUNNER, who teamed up with (ahem!) oldtimer BARRY SMITH on a recent Dr. Strange mini-saga, and who's slated for other things to boot! Then of course there's Roisterous RALPH REESE, who helped us launch our new JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY mag, now on sale; the Irreverent BILLY GRAHAM, who's polishing the pencils on the latest Luke Cage landmark; Madcap MIKE TRIMPE, who's been helping brother HERBIE splash India ink on the latest Ant-Man extravaganzas—and this doesn't even count "Duke" WAYNE BORING, one of comicdom's potent pioneers, whose recent Captain Marvel return marks his first (but hopefully not his last) outing for the House of Ideas! Nope, we're not putting the ROMITAS and the BUSCEMAS and the rest of the Bullpen out to pasture—far from it! Rather, we plan to combine the best of the "old" with the best of the "new"—as miraculous Marvel picks up steam-roller speed on its breakaway path to greatness! You come too. . . .

ITEM! You've probably noticed the name GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER popping up on a tale or two of late, and wondered who (or what) he is! Well, he's an old crony and colleague of none other than Merry GERRY CONWAY—and he's a talented fantasy author in his own right! If you don't believe us, just fall by your local bookstore, which should now be displaying George's first hardbound s-f novel, which has the unlikely title *What Entropy Means to Me.* (And if you think the *title* is way-out, wait'll you read the book itself!) Okay, G.A.—that's plug enough for one issue! Welcome aboard—but the first time you miss a deadline, we're gonna tell the whole wide world how you got the nickname "Piglet"! 'Nuff said?

ITEM! And, if the rest of you wanna know what *else* STAN, ROY, and the Bullpen Gang have in store for you—sneak a peek at the snappy subliminal-type messages we've sprinkled around the various mags this month! Getting there is half the fun, Flame-Keeper! Peace!

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

A Sizzling Selection of Gargantuan Goodies NOW ON SALE!

FANTASTIC FOUR #127: The ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing fights alone! And—some of the most mind-staggering John Buscema artwork yet! Miss it not!

SPIDER-MAN #113: Doc Ock is back! Plus—everybody's favorite wall-crawler, trapped in the middle of the biggest Gang War this side of "The Godfather"!

INCREDIBLE HULK #156: It's Hulk vs. Hulk—to the death! But one of our green-skinned goliaths has the brain of—Bruce Banner! An instant smash!

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #1: Marvel's newest voyage into the World of the Weird! And with titles like "Dig Me No Grave!"—"House!"—and "More Than Blood!"—how can any ghostly-tales aficionado go wrong?

THE GUNHAWKS #1: Reno Smith and Kid Cassidy—black man and white man, pitted against every owlhoot gun in the wild and woolly West!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN #19: Barry Smith returns as artist of the most widely-heralded comic-mag of all! And the story ain't bad, either!

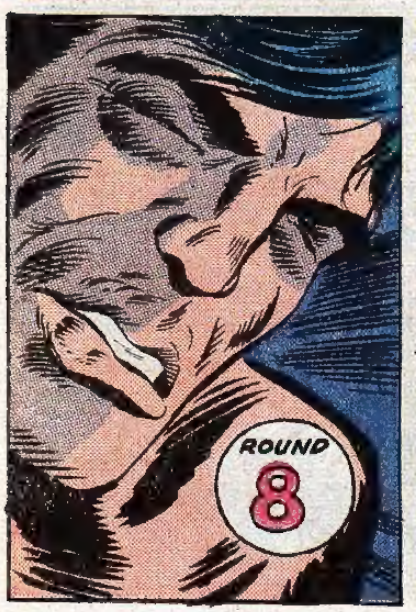
FEAR #10: In his own series at last! The macabre Man-Thing—perhaps the most monstrous "hero" ever! Script by Conway—art by Gray Morrow!

Plus, these wondrous winners—

THOR #204 (Mephisto returns!)—AVENGERS #104—CAPT. AMERICA & THE FALCON #154—HERO FOR HIRE #3 (with the man called Mace!)—DAREDEVIL #92—SUB-MARINER #54—IRON MAN #51—JUNGLE ACTION #1 (a sleeper!)—ASTONISHING TALES #14 (Ka-Zar goes to town!)—WARLOCK #2—DOC SAVAGE #1 (remember *it*?)—DEFENDERS #2 (co-starring the Silver Surfer!)—SPOOF #2—MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #6 (The Ghost Rider lives—or does he?)—COMBAT KELLY #3—and enough other assorted condiments and comix to keep you busy till *next* time!

Collect 'em all, hear?

SIX!
AND AGAIN I HAD TO SHAKE THE THOUGHT... CAUSE COCHRAN WAS GETTING UP...
SEVEN!
GOTTA FINISH HIM NOW! GOTTA CONCENTRATE ON THAT!
"SO I CLOSED AS HE STAGGERED TOWARD ME, AND I SAW THE GLASS LOOK IN HIS EYES...
"THEN I UNCORKED A LEFT THAT I WAS SURE WOULD TAKE HIS HEAD OFF...
"AND I KNEW I HAD HIM, BY THE SAG IN HIS KNEES...
"ONLY TO BE FRUSTRATED WHEN HE WAS SAVED BY THE BELL!
THE GUY'S OUT OF IT, CLANCY! HE'S BEEN DRUGGED OR SOMETHIN'! DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HE IS!
YOU GOTTA DO SOMETHIN'! I'M AFRAID I'LL KILL HIM IF HE COMES OUT AGAIN!
OKAY, KID! LEMME TALK TO THE REF!
"BUT IT WAS NO SOAP! THE REF WOULDN'T BUY OUR ARGUMENTS... AND I WAS SCARED WHEN THE BELL FOR ROUND TWO SOUNDED...
"SCARED NOT FOR MYSELF, BUT FOR WHAT I MIGHT DO TO THE POOR STIFF I WAS FIGHTING...



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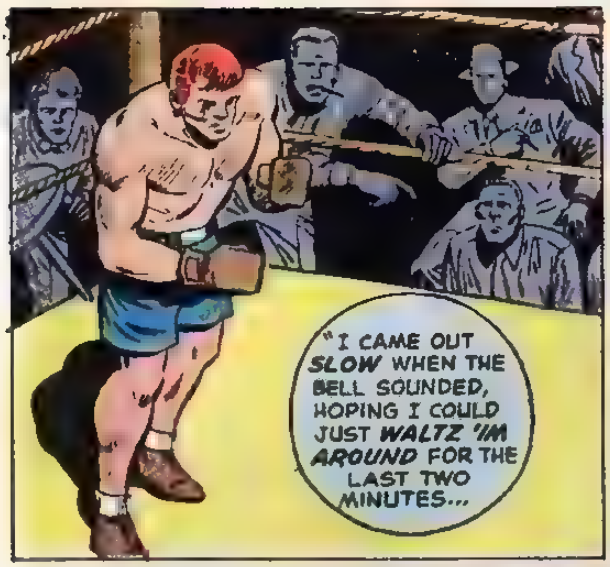
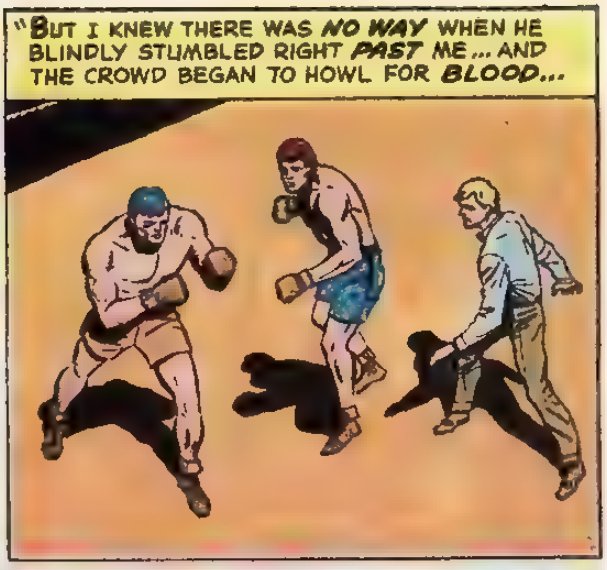
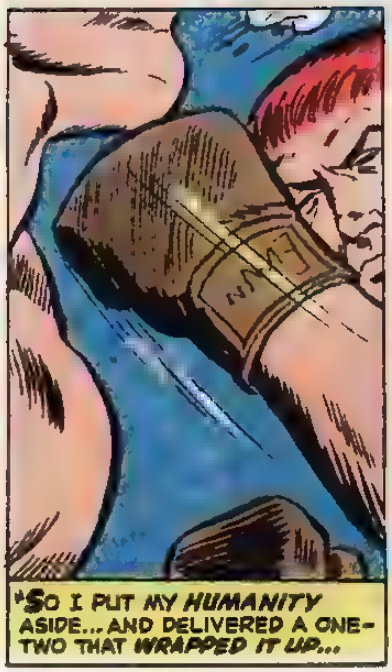

"I CAME OUT SLOW WHEN THE BELL SOUNDED, HOPING I COULD JUST WALTZ 'IM AROUND FOR THE LAST TWO MINUTES...

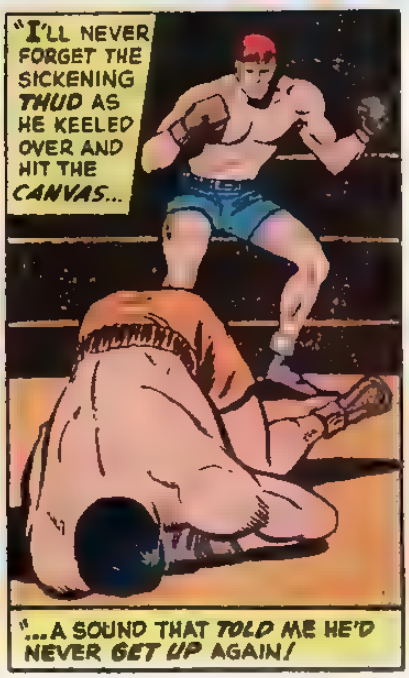

"BUT I KNEW THERE WAS NO WAY WHEN HE BLINDLY STUMBLED RIGHT PAST ME... AND THE CROWD BEGAN TO HOWL FOR BLOOD...

HE'S OUT ON HIS FEET... BUT THE CROWD WANTS ME TO KAYO 'IM... AND IF I DON'T... IT COULD GO ROUGH FOR ME BACK IN THE BARRACKS!!
THE ARMY DOESN'T LIKE QUITTERS!

BOOO!

"THE CROWD BOILED MY BLOOD-- I COULDN'T THINK STRAIGHT--


"SO I PUT MY HUMANITY ASIDE... AND DELIVERED A ONE-TWO THAT WRAPPED IT UP...


"I'LL NEVER FORGET THE SICKENING THUD AS HE KEELED OVER AND HIT THE CANVAS...
"...A SOUND THAT TOLD ME HE'D NEVER GET UP AGAIN!

"LATER, AS I SAT IN MY DRESSING ROOM...
I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT! I HURT HIM BAD...
TAKE IT EASY, MAN! YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO!
YEAH... BUT WAS IT WHAT I HAD TO AS A MAN... OR AS A PUNCH DRUNK ANIMAL?
I GOT BAD NEWS, KID! COCHRAN'S... HE DIED... MASSIVE BRAIN DAMAGE!
AND THE MP'S ARE WAITIN' FOR YOU!
MY GOD! WHY SHOULDN'T THEY BE?! I JUST KILLED A MAN, DIDN'T I?!
"I GOT DRESSED AS QUICK AS I COULD AND SURRENDERED, NOT EVEN CARING WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...
TOUGH BREAK, KELLY!
SURE... BUT NOT HALF AS TOUGH AS IT IS FOR COCHRAN!
"ALL THE WAY TO THE STOCKADE, I KEPT THINKING ABOUT IT... THINKING HOW, IF I'D BEEN ANY KIND OF MAN... I'D HAVE REFUSED TO KEEP FIGHTING...
"BUT I HADN'T BEEN ANY KIND OF MAN... AND MY STUPID, BLIND AMBITION HAD LEFT ANOTHER MAN DEAD...
"IT WASN'T UNTIL A WEEK LATER THAT A MILITARY LEGAL EAGLE MADE ME OPEN MY EYES...
YOU MEAN, THE WAY YOU SEE IT... I'M NOT TO BLAME FOR WHAT HAPPENED?!
WHILE I CAN'T CONDONE YOUR CONTINUED BATTERING OF HIM...
...NEITHER CAN I CONDONE THE CHARGES AGAINST YOU!
THEREFORE, I'M GOING TO TAKE YOUR CASE... AND WIN IT!

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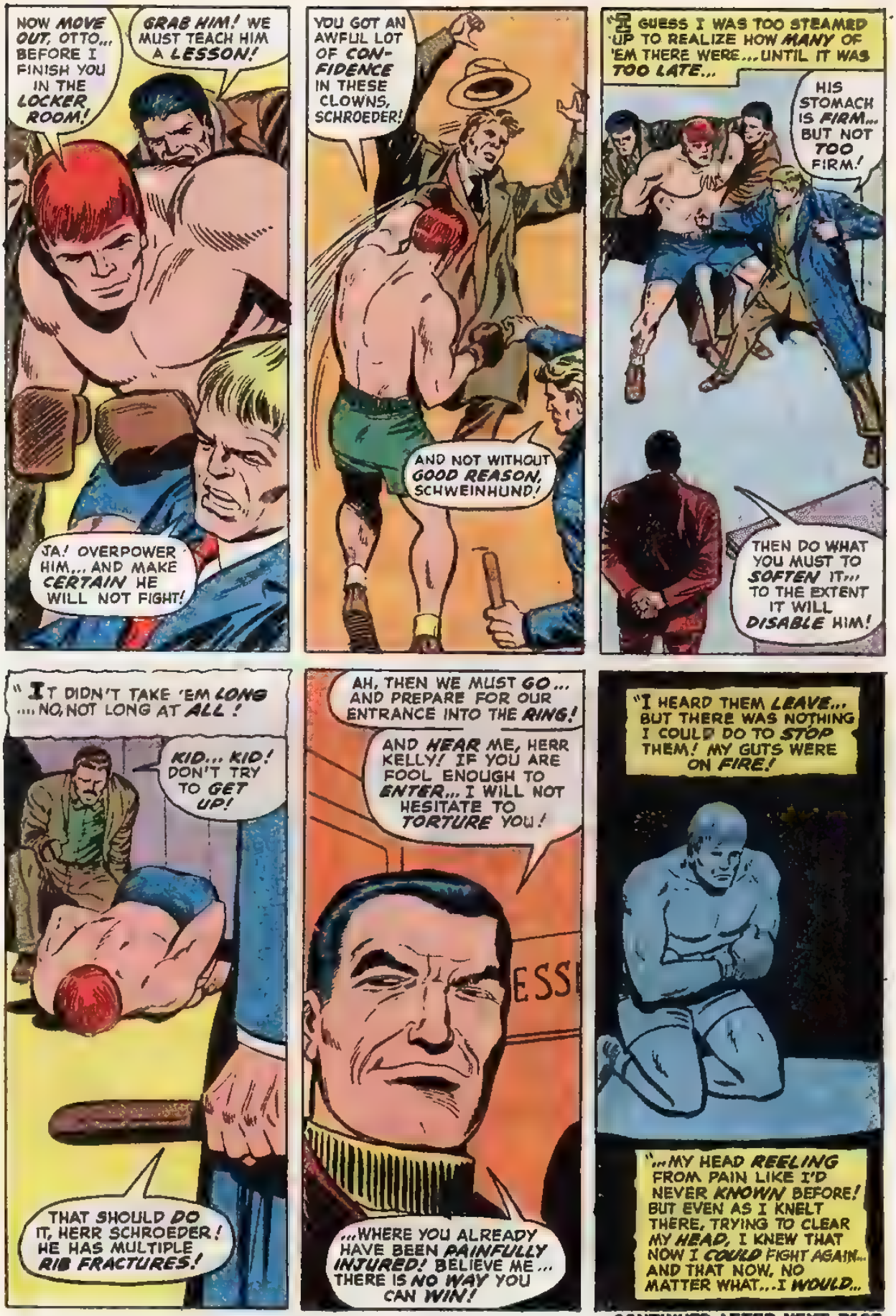
"BUT BEFORE THERE COULD EVEN BE A HEARING, I WAS HAULED INTO THE GENERAL'S OFFICE...
SO WE'RE RELEASING YOU, KELLY... TEMPORARILY, OF COURSE... SINCE YOU'RE THE ONLY HOPE AMERICA HAS!
THE GERMAN SERVICE CHAMPION HAS CHALLENGED US... AND YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN CARRY OUR COLORS!
IF THE NAZI CHAMP WINS, IT COULD BE A SEVERE BLOW TO THE MORALE OF THE ENTIRE FREE WORLD!
BUT, IF WE WIN,.. WELL, I THINK YOU GET THE PICTURE!
YESSIR!
I NOTICE A LACK OF ENTHUSIASM IN YOUR VOICE, SOLDIER! AM I CORRECT?!
YES, YOU ARE, SIR! WOULD YOU WANT TO FIGHT AGAIN...
...AFTER YOU'VE KILLED A MAN IN THE RING?!
NO I SUPPOSE I WOULDN'T... BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT!
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PUT YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS ASIDE... AND THINK ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY!
HAVE TO, SIR?! THAT SOUNDS LIKE A THREAT!
TAKE IT ANY WAY YOU LIKE! THE FACT IS, YOU'RE GOING TO FIGHT THE NAZI...
...AND WHAT'S MORE, YOU'RE GOING TO BEAT HIM... OR YOU'LL REGRET IT!
WHEN THE FIGHT'S OVER, WE'LL SEE WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT GETTING THOSE CHARGES DROPPED!
IN THE MEANTIME, I SUGGEST YOU GET TO THE GYM AND START TRAINING...
...THE FIGHT'S TO BE HELD A WEEK FROM TONIGHT!

"SO I SWALLOWED IT... AND I TRAINED, PRAYING ALL THE WHILE I'D BE ABLE TO FIGHT WHEN THE TIME CAME! THEN, ON THE NIGHT OF THE BOUT...
THAT'S ENOUGH, KID! TAKE IT EASY WHILE I GO CHECK OUT THE CROWD!
SURE, CLANCY! WHATEVER YOU SAY!
"THEN, AS I WAS RELAXING, I HAD SOME VISITORS...
HERR KELLY! I AM KARL SCHROEDER... YOUR OPPONENT! I WANT TO TALK WITH YOU!
OH, YEAH! WELL, I THINK YOU BETTER SAVE IT FOR THE RING!
BY THE TIME I GET FINISHED, YOU'LL NEED ALL THE BREATH YOU CAN GRASP!
NO! I THINK NOT--IS THAT NOT CORRECT, HERR CLANCY? INSTRUCT YOUR FIGHTER AS I TOLD YOU TO DO!
NOT IF THAT MUG BREAKS MY ARM, YOU NAZI SKUNK! MY FIGHTERS DON'T THROW FIGHTS!
YOU ARE WRONG, HERR CLANCY! THEY DO... AND HERR KELLY WILL!
LIKE I TOLD YA... NO WAY!
AND WHAT SAY YOU, HERR KELLY?!
ARE YOU AS FOOLISH AS YOUR MANAGER?!
FOOLISH ENOUGH TO THROW YOU OUT OF HERE IF YOU DON'T LEAVE OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL!
NO! YOU THINK YOURSELF CAPABLE... AGAINST THE ARYAN CHAMPION?!
NOPE! I'VE FOUND THAT IN THIS LOUSY BUSINESS, IT'S BEST NOT TO THINK ABOUT ANYTHING!
IT'S A LOT SMARTER SIMPLY TO ACT!
SMAK!!


NOW MOVE OUT, OTTO... BEFORE I FINISH YOU IN THE LOCKER ROOM!
GRAB HIM! WE MUST TEACH HIM A LESSON!
JA! OVERPOWER HIM... AND MAKE CERTAIN HE WILL NOT FIGHT!
YOU GOT AN AWFUL LOT OF CONFIDENCE IN THESE CLOWNS, SCHROEDER!
AND NOT WITHOUT GOOD REASON, SCHWEINHUND!
I GUESS I WAS TOO STEAMED UP TO REALIZE HOW MANY OF 'EM THERE WERE... UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE...
HIS STOMACH IS FIRM... BUT NOT TOO FIRM!
THEN DO WHAT YOU MUST TO SOFTEN IT... TO THE EXTENT IT WILL DISABLE HIM!
"IT DIDN'T TAKE 'EM LONG ... NO, NOT LONG AT ALL!
KID... KID! DON'T TRY TO GET UP!
THAT SHOULD DO IT, HERR SCHROEDER! HE HAS MULTIPLE RIB FRACTURES!
AH, THEN WE MUST GO... AND PREPARE FOR OUR ENTRANCE INTO THE RING!
AND HEAR ME, HERR KELLY! IF YOU ARE FOOL ENOUGH TO ENTER... I WILL NOT HESITATE TO TORTURE YOU!
...WHERE YOU ALREADY HAVE BEEN PAINFULLY INJURED! BELIEVE ME... THERE IS NO WAY YOU CAN WIN!
"I HEARD THEM LEAVE... BUT THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO TO STOP THEM! MY GUTS WERE ON FIRE!
"...MY HEAD REELING FROM PAIN LIKE I'D NEVER KNOWN BEFORE! BUT EVEN AS I KNELT THERE, TRYING TO CLEAR MY HEAD, I KNEW THAT NOW I COULD FIGHT AGAIN... AND THAT NOW, NO MATTER WHAT... I WOULD...

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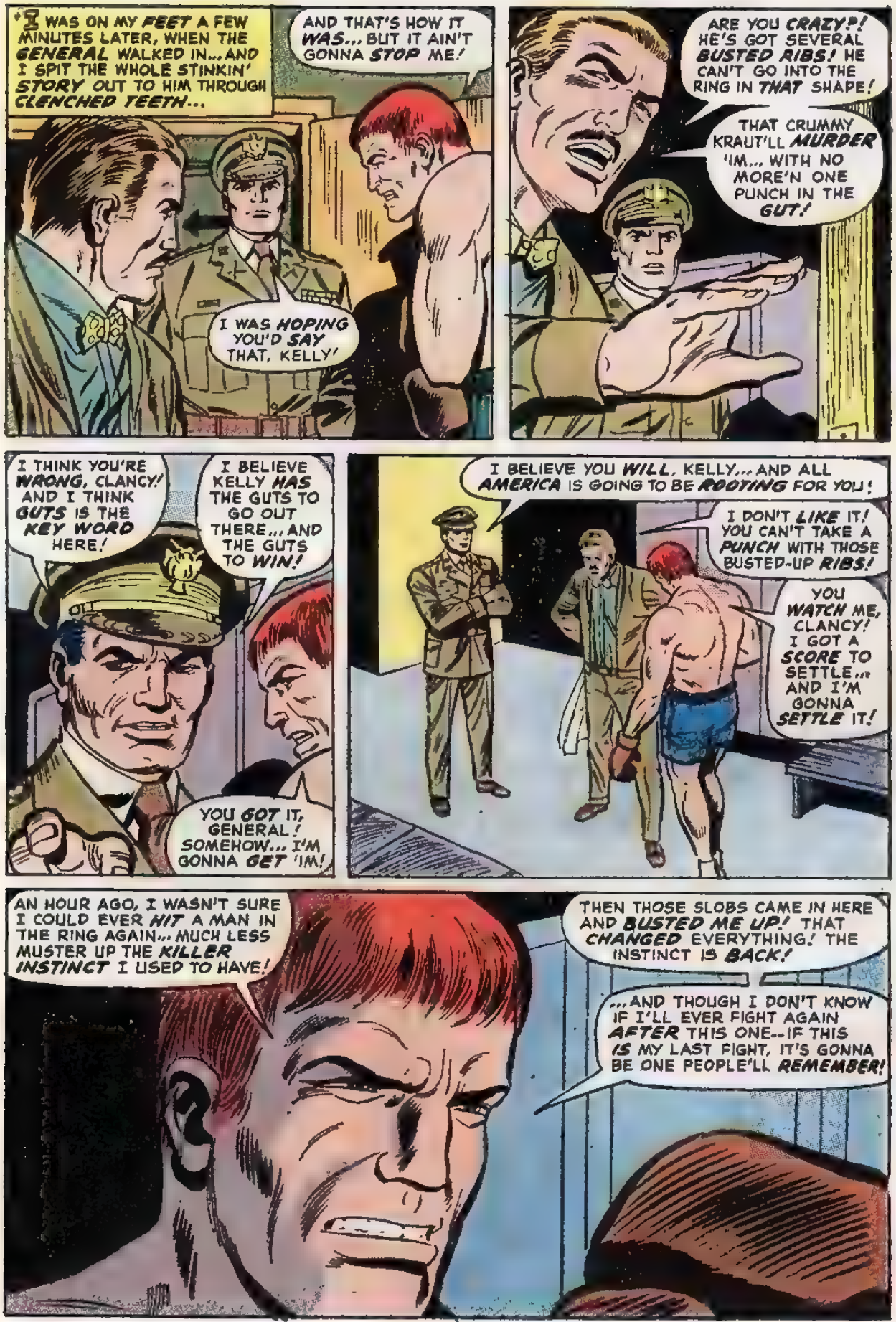
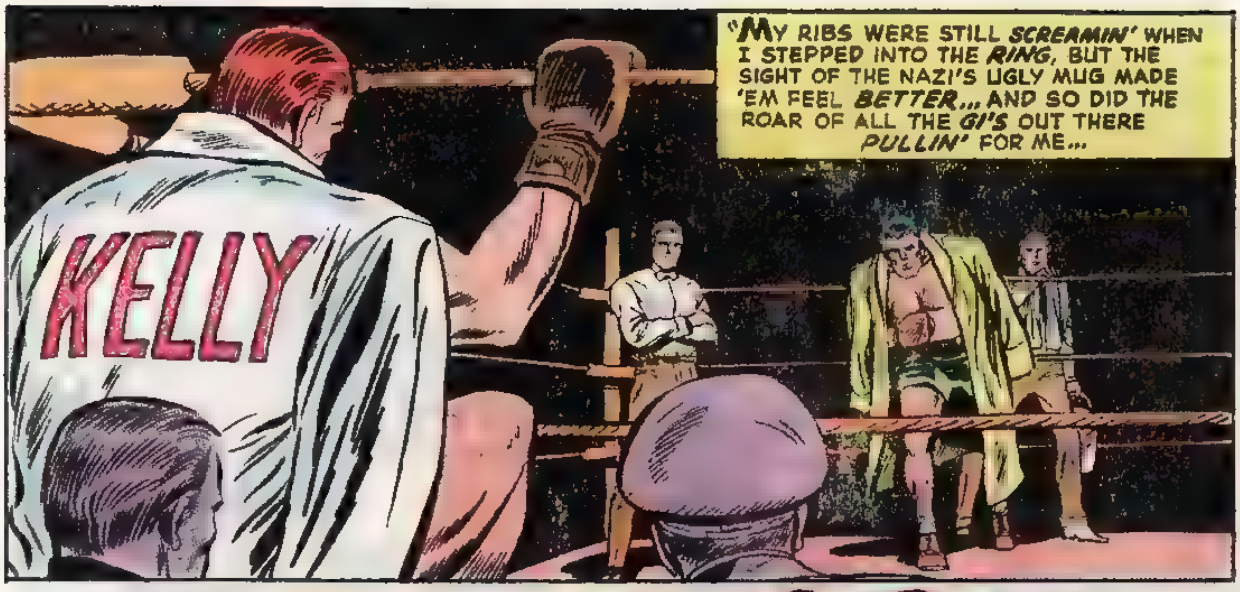
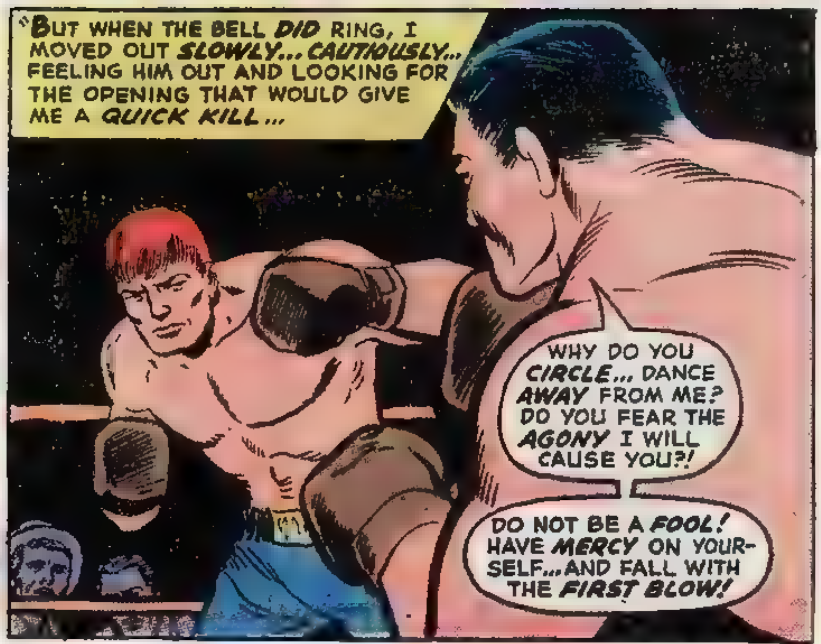

I WAS ON MY FEET A FEW MINUTES LATER, WHEN THE GENERAL WALKED IN... AND I SPIT THE WHOLE STINKIN' STORY OUT TO HIM THROUGH CLENCHED TEETH...
AND THAT'S HOW IT WAS... BUT IT AIN'T GONNA STOP ME!
I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT, KELLY!
ARE YOU CRAZY?! HE'S GOT SEVERAL BUSTED RIBS! HE CAN'T GO INTO THE RING IN THAT SHAPE!
THAT CRUMMY KRAUT'LL MURDER 'IM... WITH NO MORE'N ONE PUNCH IN THE GUT!
I THINK YOU'RE WRONG, CLANCY! AND I THINK GUTS IS THE KEY WORD HERE!
I BELIEVE KELLY HAS THE GUTS TO GO OUT THERE... AND THE GUTS TO WIN!
YOU GOT IT, GENERAL! SOMEHOW... I'M GONNA GET 'IM!
I BELIEVE YOU WILL, KELLY... AND ALL AMERICA IS GOING TO BE ROOTING FOR YOU!
I DON'T LIKE IT! YOU CAN'T TAKE A PUNCH WITH THOSE BUSTED-UP RIBS!
YOU WATCH ME, CLANCY! I GOT A SCORE TO SETTLE... AND I'M GONNA SETTLE IT!
AN HOUR AGO, I WASN'T SURE I COULD EVER HIT A MAN IN THE RING AGAIN... MUCH LESS MUSTER UP THE KILLER INSTINCT I USED TO HAVE!
THEN THOSE SLOBS CAME IN HERE AND BUSTED ME UP! THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING! THE INSTINCT IS BACK!
...AND THOUGH I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL EVER FIGHT AGAIN AFTER THIS ONE--IF THIS IS MY LAST FIGHT, IT'S GONNA BE ONE PEOPLE'LL REMEMBER!


KELLY
"MY RIBS WERE STILL SCREAMIN' WHEN I STEPPED INTO THE RING, BUT THE SIGHT OF THE NAZI'S UGLY MUG MADE 'EM FEEL BETTER... AND SO DID THE ROAR OF ALL THE GI'S OUT THERE PULLIN' FOR ME...

THE KRAUT HASN'T GOT A CHANCE! KELLY'LL MURDER THE BUM!
I WOULDN'T BET ON THAT, AMERIKANER!
COME ON, HERR SCHROEDER! WIN FOR DER FÜHRER!

"CLANCY WAS TALKIN' A MILE-A-MINUTE AS WE WAITED FOR THE BELL, BUT I DIDN'T HEAR A WORD HE WAS SAYIN'...
LET'S GO, SCHROEDER! WE'RE GONNA END THIS IN A HURRY!


"BUT WHEN THE BELL DID RING, I MOVED OUT SLOWLY... CAUTIOUSLY... FEELING HIM OUT AND LOOKING FOR THE OPENING THAT WOULD GIVE ME A QUICK KILL...
WHY DO YOU CIRCLE... DANCE AWAY FROM ME? DO YOU FEAR THE AGONY I WILL CAUSE YOU?!
DO NOT BE A FOOL! HAVE MERCY ON YOURSELF... AND FALL WITH THE FIRST BLOW!

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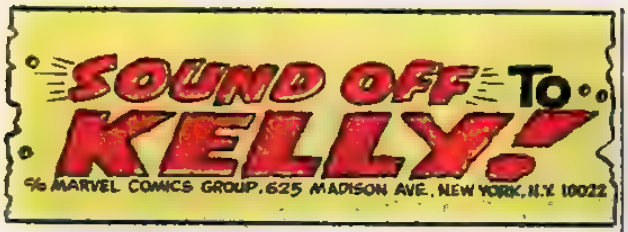


Dear Stan, Gary, and Dick . . .

Your first issue of COMBAT KELLY AND THE DEADLY DOZEN was pretty good. Not perfect, mind you, but good nevertheless. This first issue was, for the most part, an introductory issue, and, hopefully, the direction the book will take will come out in future issues.

As was the case with CAPT. SAVAGE, you will no doubt receive letters saying that COMBAT KELLY is nothing more than an imitation of SGT. FURY. As far as battle action and missions go, this will probably be true. There's not too much variety you can achieve in that sort of thing, especially since Kelly and Fury are both commando-type groups led by Happy Sam. But you *can* achieve quite a bit of difference between the groups personality-wise. Fury and the Howlers fight because it's their duty and they all want to see Europe freed from the terror reign of the Nazis. On the other hand, the majority of Combat Kelly's group seem to be fighting to stay out of jail. In other words, Fury & Company are fighting for others. Kelly & Group (for the most part) are fighting for personal gain. This was brought out very well in #1, and should continue to be an important part of the future issues. As far as personality itself goes, Ace Hamilton's was brought out very well. He actually enjoyed killing those German soldiers. Good. There are people like Ace in the real world, so why not in "Comic Books"? The personalities of the remaining 10 (I'm not counting Dino & Percy) were not as apparent, but I'm sure they will be in the future.

Other things to build on in future issues would be Dino and Percy's preference for fighting with Sgt. Fury's squad, and the jealousy of the rest of the group toward the former Howlers — both their excellent battle records and their good military conduct.

Speaking of Dino and Percy, it was a good idea on your part to transfer them to the Deadly Dozen. It should draw SGT. FURY fans to COMBAT KELLY, which is probably why you decided to do such a thing in the first place. Along the same line, the inclusion of Jay Little Bear will no doubt bring in a few fans of CAPT. SAVAGE. COMBAT KELLY may have been an outstanding success even *without* the established stars, but a little extra insurance never hurt anybody, did it?

There are a few things that need explanation, though. Kelly and his group are in the army, right? But in CAPTAIN SAVAGE, Jay Little Bear was a Marine. What happened? Was he transferred to the Army, or is he still a Marine, just fighting *with* the Army? Go into Jay's past and show what happened to him between issue #19 of SAVAGE and issue #1 of KELLY. As long as it's on my mind, it would be a good idea to investigate the pasts of the rest of the group as well. I'll bet we could find out some mighty interesting things. Getting back to unexplained mysteries, however, there is one more thing I'll mention. In SGT. FURY #98, Dum Dum was promoted to sergeant by Happy Sam, because, in Sam's own words "We can't have a corporal leading a commando squad." Yet, in COMBAT KELLY #1, Dum Dum is a corporal again, and there's no mention at all of his promotion. Also, if a corporal can't lead a commando squad, then why wasn't *Corporal* Kelly promoted?

I'm sorry this letter took so long, but I did have a lot to say this time, and there was no way I could squeeze it all on one page. In fact, I could probably fill another page, but I'll save that for another time. Thank you.

Mike Francis, 1737 23rd Street
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

We asked Groovy Gary about that corporal business, Mike, and he had a quick answer for ya: "They got me good." But on further reflection, he had a *good* answer: Kelly, as a convicted murderer, may be eligible for a commando job under the experimental program, but he's hardly likely for a promotion. Promotions come from good conduct records.

Further, regarding Dum Dum: he was complaining from the start that he wanted to be back with Fury, and eventually he got his wish. But the Army wouldn't put two sergeants in one group, and with Sgt. Fury the leader of the Howlers, the second-in-command just has to be a corporal — a rank Dum Dum is happy to hold if he can be a part of his old group. After all, we've established that *all* the Howlers have refused promotions from time to time in order to remain Howlers. Okay, Mr. F?

And your questions about Jay Little Bear, the positions of Dino and Percy, and the divergent personalities of the group will all come clear in future issues, just as you surmise.

Stan, Gary, Dick, Jim:

The idea of putting twelve ex-cons in one happy little family is not original. Nor is it good. But this comic does have versimilitude. It seems real. In this comic, people can die. People will die. This comic is going to depict war the way it is. And in that way, this comic is going to be different from SGT. FURY.

What do I want to see in KELLY? The kind of stories you used to write . . . the "The" series. I mean that series of tales that used to appear in SGT. FURY—"The Informer," "Assassin," "Deserter," "War Lover," et al. They were great and stand out in my mind as the best of the SGT. FURY series.

But this mag is not SGT. FURY. There's no sense dwelling on that magazine's failures and achievements. Ayers and Mooney make a good team. Mooney's inking brings Ayers' art out into a nice boldness, Mooney is the second best inker for Ayers. John Severin is best. Gary's script was good, but isn't Jay Little Bear a Marine? This is an Army outfit so he'd better have a special transfer! There was one sub-plot that looks promising, and that's that cold blooded murder by Ace Hamilton. Boy, he is some sadist. I would bet mentally disturbed, also. All the better. Don't kill him off or give him a court martial immediately, though. Perhaps he should kill another of the Dozen and then be killed. He's the most promising character in this bunch of thieves, killers, spies, and other cons you've unleashed upon unsuspecting Marveldom. I recommend some racial tension and bigotry among the group. At least 4 races are represented among them and there surely should be more tension then there was among the Howlers.

And there are always problems among criminals. Jensen the pickpocket might partake of the others' cash. Wagner is supposedly constantly intoxicated. Make him so. Shigeta should again be involved with drugs, perhaps providing them for another member. Simpson should set up another black market. And there should be a rapid turnover in members. By issue #30, only six of the original members should be left. And remember, they're fighting for pardons, so at least one of them should be pardoned by that ish #30 I was talking about.

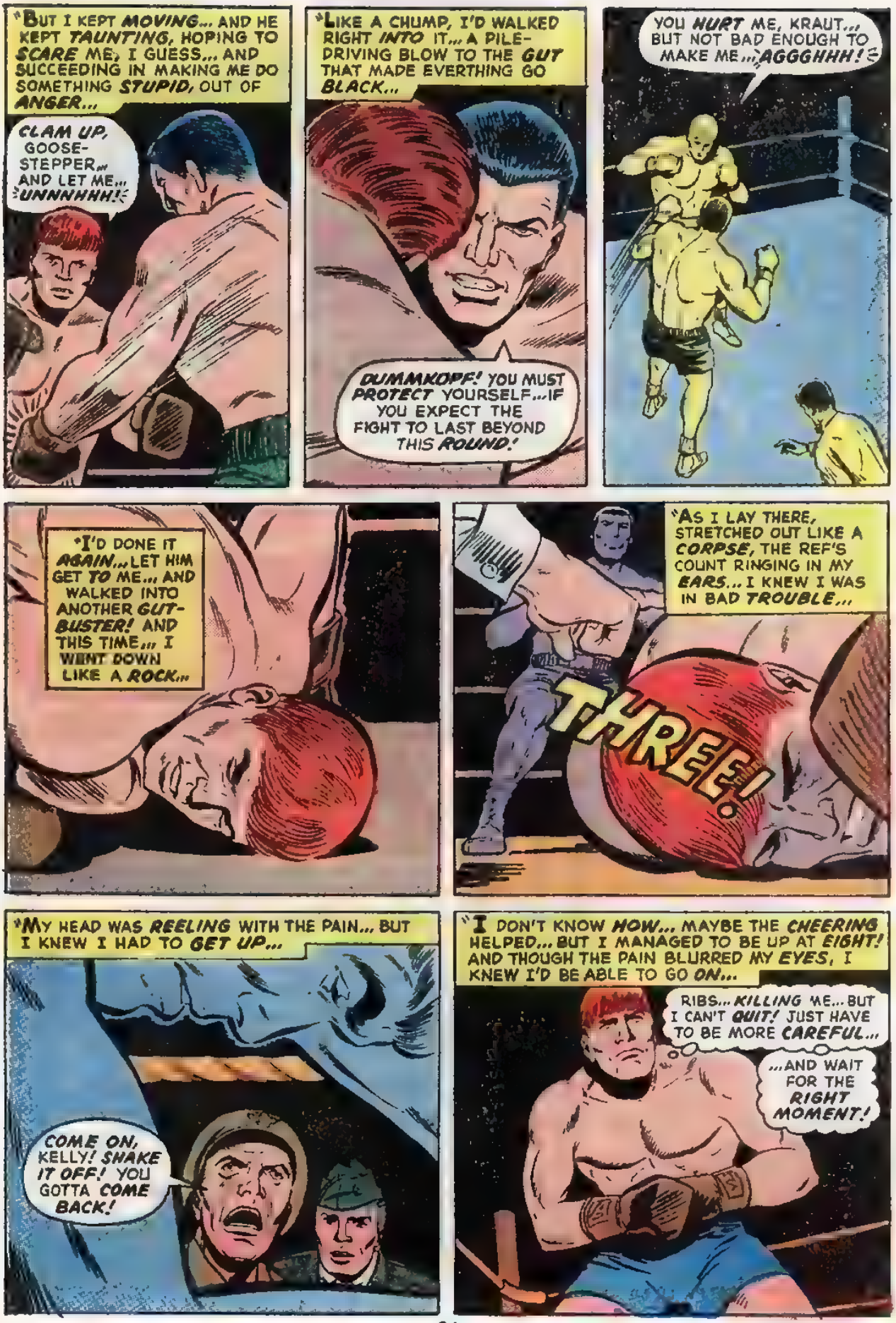
About mistakes: I wasn't aware that there was a half bald, red haired member of the team. So who's the guy holding the gun on the German on p. 12, panel 2?

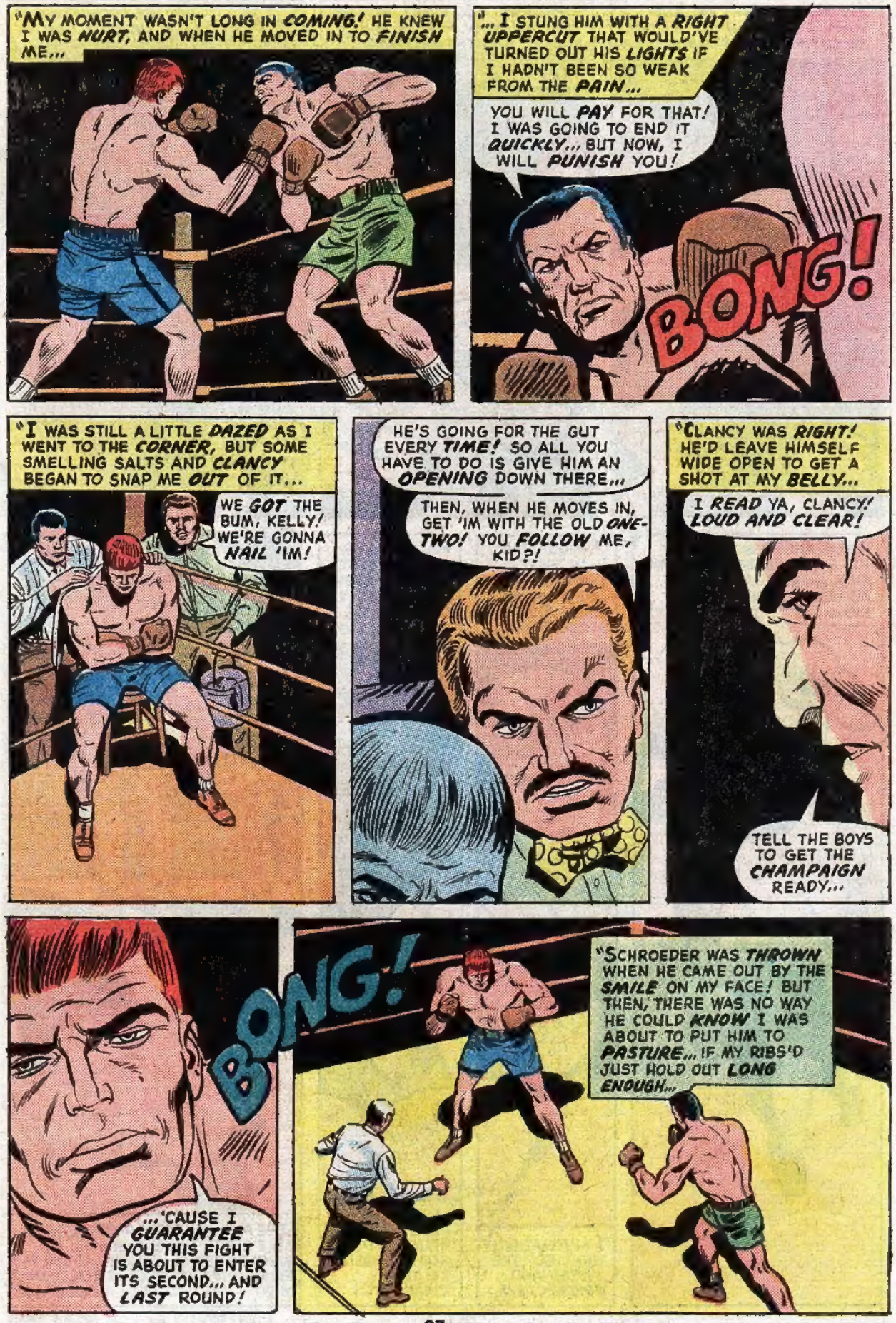
So much for my critique, comments, and suggestions. COMBAT KELLY AND THE DEADLY DOZEN has a deadly amount of potential. What you do with that potential will determine which way the mag will go — with SGT. FURY or with CAPTAIN SAVAGE.

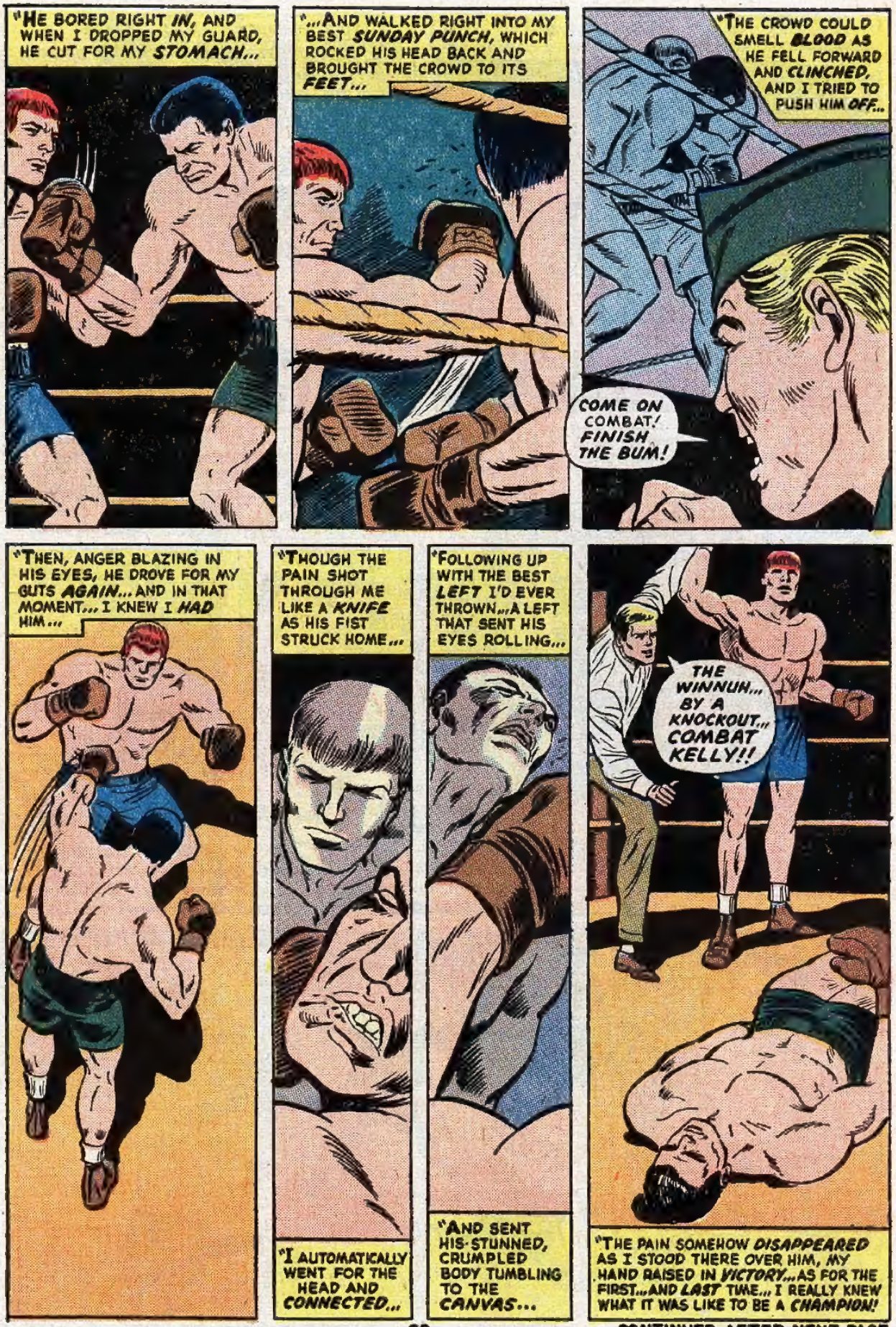
RFO, QNS, KOF David McDonnell
1207 Colony Court, #327
Lebanon, Pa. 17042

The guy on page 12, huh . . .? Why, that was . . . uh . . . ahem . . . well . . . and, ah, that's who he was, all right, all right.

Any other questions, Dave?


"BUT I KEPT MOVING... AND HE KEPT TAUNTING, HOPING TO SCARE ME, I GUESS... AND SUCCEEDING IN MAKING ME DO SOMETHING STUPID, OUT OF ANGER...
CLAM UP, GOOSE-STEPPER... AND LET ME... UNNNHHH!
"LIKE A CHUMP, I'D WALKED RIGHT INTO IT... A PILE-DRIVING BLOW TO THE GUT THAT MADE EVERTHING GO BLACK...
DUMMKOPF! YOU MUST PROTECT YOURSELF... IF YOU EXPECT THE FIGHT TO LAST BEYOND THIS ROUND!
YOU HURT ME, KRAUT... BUT NOT BAD ENOUGH TO MAKE ME... AGGGHHH!
"I'D DONE IT AGAIN... LET HIM GET TO ME... AND WALKED INTO ANOTHER GUT-BUSTER! AND THIS TIME... I WENT DOWN LIKE A ROCK...
"AS I LAY THERE, STRETCHED OUT LIKE A CORPSE, THE REF'S COUNT RINGING IN MY EARS... I KNEW I WAS IN BAD TROUBLE...
THREE!
"MY HEAD WAS REELING WITH THE PAIN... BUT I KNEW I HAD TO GET UP...
COME ON, KELLY! SHAKE IT OFF! YOU GOTTA COME BACK!
"I DON'T KNOW HOW... MAYBE THE CHEERING HELPED... BUT I MANAGED TO BE UP AT EIGHT! AND THOUGH THE PAIN BLURRED MY EYES, I KNEW I'D BE ABLE TO GO ON...
RIBS... KILLING ME... BUT I CAN'T QUIT! JUST HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL...
...AND WAIT FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT!


"MY MOMENT WASN'T LONG IN COMING! HE KNEW I WAS HURT, AND WHEN HE MOVED IN TO FINISH ME...
"... I STUNG HIM WITH A RIGHT UPPERCUT THAT WOULD'VE TURNED OUT HIS LIGHTS IF I HADN'T BEEN SO WEAK FROM THE PAIN...
YOU WILL PAY FOR THAT! I WAS GOING TO END IT QUICKLY... BUT NOW, I WILL PUNISH YOU!
BONG!
"I WAS STILL A LITTLE DAZED AS I WENT TO THE CORNER, BUT SOME SMELLING SALTS AND CLANCY BEGAN TO SNAP ME OUT OF IT...
WE GOT THE BUM, KELLY! WE'RE GONNA NAIL 'IM!
HE'S GOING FOR THE GUT EVERY TIME! SO ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS GIVE HIM AN OPENING DOWN THERE...
THEN, WHEN HE MOVES IN, GET 'IM WITH THE OLD ONE-TWO! YOU FOLLOW ME, KID?!
"CLANCY WAS RIGHT! HE'D LEAVE HIMSELF WIDE OPEN TO GET A SHOT AT MY BELLY...
I READ YA, CLANCY! LOUD AND CLEAR!
TELL THE BOYS TO GET THE CHAMPAIGN READY...
BONG!
...'CAUSE I GUARANTEE YOU THIS FIGHT IS ABOUT TO ENTER ITS SECOND... AND LAST ROUND!
"SCHROEDER WAS THROWN WHEN HE CAME OUT BY THE SMILE ON MY FACE! BUT THEN, THERE WAS NO WAY HE COULD KNOW I WAS ABOUT TO PUT HIM TO PASTURE... IF MY RIBS'D JUST HOLD OUT LONG ENOUGH...

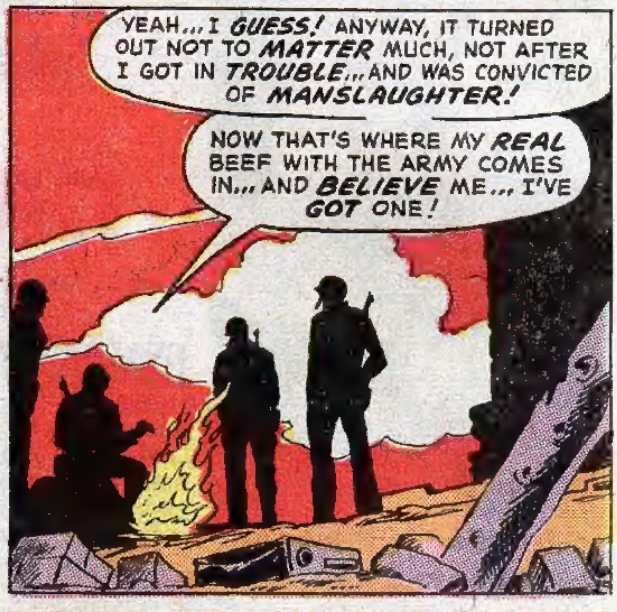

"HE BORED RIGHT IN, AND WHEN I DROPPED MY GUARD, HE CUT FOR MY STOMACH...
"...AND WALKED RIGHT INTO MY BEST SUNDAY PUNCH, WHICH ROCKED HIS HEAD BACK AND BROUGHT THE CROWD TO ITS FEET...
"THE CROWD COULD SMELL BLOOD AS HE FELL FORWARD AND CLINCHED, AND I TRIED TO PUSH HIM OFF...
COME ON COMBAT! FINISH THE BUM!
"THEN, ANGER BLAZING IN HIS EYES, HE DROVE FOR MY GUTS AGAIN... AND IN THAT MOMENT... I KNEW I HAD HIM...
"THOUGH THE PAIN SHOT THROUGH ME LIKE A KNIFE AS HIS FIST STRUCK HOME...
"I AUTOMATICALLY WENT FOR THE HEAD AND CONNECTED...
"FOLLOWING UP WITH THE BEST LEFT I'D EVER THROWN... A LEFT THAT SENT HIS EYES ROLLING...
"AND SENT HIS STUNNED, CRUMPLED BODY TUMBLING TO THE CANVAS...
THE WINNUH... BY A KNOCKOUT... COMBAT KELLY!!
"THE PAIN SOMEHOW DISAPPEARED AS I STOOD THERE OVER HIM, MY HAND RAISED IN VICTORY... AS FOR THE FIRST... AND LAST TIME... I REALLY KNEW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE A CHAMPION!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

YEAH... THAT WAS MY BIGGEST FIGHT... AND MY LAST ONE! IT WAS ALL OVER AFTER THAT!
THEY DROPPED THE CHARGES AGAINST ME... BUT I WAS FORBIDDEN TO EVER FIGHT AGAIN IN THE SERVICE!

THEY DID FIND OUT THE GUY I KILLED WAS DRUGGED--AND THAT THE REF HAD BEEN BRIBED TO KEEP THE FIGHT GOING!
...BUT THEY STILL REFUSED TO LET ME BOX AGAIN... EVEN THOUGH I WASN'T GUILTY OF ANYTHING!

THAT REALLY STINKS... I MEAN... YOU WERE ONE OF THE BEST! YOU COULD'VE FOUGHT THE PRO CHAMP WHEN YOU GOT OUT!
GUESS THE BRASS WAS JUST AFRAID ...AFRAID ALL THAT SORDID BUSINESS ABOUT THE DRUGGING WOULD GET OUT!


YEAH... I GUESS! ANYWAY, IT TURNED OUT NOT TO MATTER MUCH, NOT AFTER I GOT IN TROUBLE... AND WAS CONVICTED OF MANSLAUGHTER!
NOW THAT'S WHERE MY REAL BEEF WITH THE ARMY COMES IN... AND BELIEVE ME... I'VE GOT ONE!

I'M JOLLY WELL CERTAIN YOU DO, CORPORAL... BUT HOW ABOUT LETTING US IN ON IT!
I MIGHT AS WELL... SINCE I'VE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING ELSE! LEMME SEE... IT WAS TWO YEARS LATER, AND I WAS...

HIT THE DIRT! I HEAR PLANES COMIN'... AND THAT CAN ONLY MEAN...
...THE KRAUTS ARE GONNA TRY TO BLAST US OUT!

KERWHOOM!
MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!
WE GOTTA KEEP THE TANKS ROLLING!
BARROOM!
A SCOUT PLANE MUST'VE SPOTTED US! WE GOTTA MOVE DEEPER INTO THE WOODS!
I HATE TO TELL YA, CORP... BUT THOSE SHELLS AIN'T COMIN' FROM PLANES!
I'M HEP! I CAN HEAR THE PANZERS MOVIN' TOWARD US NOW!
I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY GOT THE TANKS... BUT THEY'RE MOUNTIN' A MAJOR PANZER ATTACK AGAINST US!
AND ALL WE CAN DO IS RUN FOR IT... UNTIL WE CAN GET SOME REINFORCEMENTS UP HERE!
IF WE CAN GET REINFORCEMENTS... AND IF WE CAN'T... WELL...
WHOOM!
NEXT
DON'T DARE MISS THE SHELL-SHOCKED SEQUEL IN SGT. FURY #104— GUEST STARRING COMBAT KELLY AND THE DEADLY DOZEN. NATCH! BE THERE, SOLDIER... AND THAT'S AN ORDER!